

CONNECTION

FALL/WINTER 2022



Telecommunications
Access of Maryland

PROGRAMS:



Maryland Relay

Dial 7-1-1

A service for Marylanders who have difficulty using a standard telephone.



Maryland Accessible Telecommunications

Equipment Distribution Program

This program provides accessible telecommunications equipment for Maryland residents ages three and older who are Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or are living with limited speech, mobility, or cognitive abilities.

MDRelay.org

Get the scoop on Deaf Community Surf Day!

Learn more on page 2.

**Maryland Relay
says farewell to
Jenny Pearson and
Tarita Turner.**

See the full story on page 5.

Community Connections Spotlight: Meet Linda Kozma-Spytek

Telecommunications Access of Maryland is proud to partner with state and national organizations that support effective, user-friendly telecommunication solutions for individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or who have difficulty speaking, cognitive difficulty, or limited mobility. In addition to our partner organizations, the people who serve these communities are some of the most dedicated and hardworking advocates for a more accessible future for everyone.



Among those individuals is Linda Kozma-Spytek, MA, CCC-A. Linda co-leads the Industry-Consumer Alliance for Accessible Technology (ICAAT)—a collaborative effort that brings together consumers who are hard of hearing and Deaf with developers who create assistive and mainstream consumer devices. ICAAT is spearheaded by the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), Gallaudet University, and the American Institutes for Research (AIR). She also has ample experience working with the technology used by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities through her role as a technology consultant for HLAA and her involvement with Gallaudet University's Deaf/Hard of Hearing Technology Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (DHH Tech RERC).

Prior to her consulting at HLAA, Linda served as a research audiologist at Gallaudet. During her time at the university, she co-led the Network of Consumer Hearing Assistive Technology Trainers (N-CHATT) program, also in cooperation with HLAA and AIR. The N-CHATT program trains individuals with hearing loss on the many ways communication devices can help their peers. Linda helped educate many people on these technologies and best practices. With her support, these individuals were able to go out into the community and use their newfound skills to assist others with setting up and using their new devices.

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Community Connections Spotlight: Meet Linda Kozma-Spytek, continued

With her years of expertise, Linda has created real change for those who are Deaf and hard of hearing by helping them stay connected with

their family, friends, and community using current communication technologies that best suit their needs.

To learn more about ICAAT and Linda's involvement with the Alliance, visit [HearingLoss.org/Programs-Events/ICAAT](https://hearingloss.org/Programs-Events/ICAAT).

For information on implementing a train-the-trainer program, visit [HearingLoss.org/Programs-Events/N-CHATT/](https://hearingloss.org/Programs-Events/N-CHATT/) to access the N-CHATT Training Guide.



MAT Attends Deaf Community Surf Day

If you were to ask any of the Deaf Community Surf Day attendees about their experience, they'd be sure to tell you that August 11 was the perfect day to catch some waves at North Beach's Indian River Inlet! The annual event hosted and led by The Ocean Is My Guru—a team of Delaware-based surfing instructors—began when owner Laurel Harrington expressed interest to her mother and MAT Specialist Jane Hager about creating a surfing event for the Deaf community.

"For several years, my daughter has told me that she wants to teach people of all ages who are Deaf how to surf," states Jane. "When I started working at MAT, I connected her with MAT Manager Kevin Steffy to see if we could brainstorm an event together. As a team, we came up with the idea for Deaf Community Surf Day!"

In its second year, the event has quickly grown from having five avid participants to over 30 new

and interested surfers. "Watching the kids and adults go from timid to empowered is always such a pleasure," shares Jane. "The people really impressed me this year. From repeat attendee Zahn—who is definitely going to go pro one day—to surfing newcomer and Communication Facilitator Eddie Martinez, everyone showed bravery, curiosity, and a willingness to try something new."

The goal of Deaf Community Surf Day is to rip the barriers down for those who are Deaf by allowing them to come out and enjoy a day of surf lessons at an accessible event with ASL instruction and personalized accommodations. "It was an opportunity to come together as a community to cheer each other on and share a passion that's fun and builds relationships," says Jane. "We're all counting down the days until we can get in the water and do it all again!"

**Want to participate in next year's Deaf Community Surf Day?
Visit TheOceanIsMyGuru.com for more information.**



Governor Hogan with the service dog of Cecilia Warren, Director of Emergency Preparedness Policy for Maryland Department of Disabilities.

The TAM Team Travels to Ocean City for the 2022 Summer MACo Conference

The TAM team had a great time exhibiting at the 2022 Summer Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Conference in Ocean City! Our team interacted with many local, state, and federal government officials and their families, showcasing our programs and services. The conference had an 80s theme this year and exhibitors were encouraged to decorate their booths and wear clothing inspired by the decade. In keeping with the 80s style, the TAM team sported cleverly designed t-shirts that reflected this year's theme by highlighting telecommunications technology from the era.

It was exciting seeing familiar faces such as Governor Larry Hogan, Director of Emergency Preparedness Policy for Maryland Department of Disabilities Cecilia Warren, Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford, and many more. We hope everyone who stopped by our booth enjoyed learning more about Maryland Relay, the MAT program, and how TAM helps improve communication for Maryland residents.



From left to right: Donna Broadway-Callaman, Leslie Hannibal, Kim McKay, Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford, Cecilia Warren and her service dog, and Carole Beatty



From left to right: TAM Finance Manager Leslie Hannibal, TAM Outreach Manager Donna Broadway-Callaman, TAM Director David Bahar, Governor Larry Hogan, MDoD Secretary Carole Beatty, MDoD Director of Communications and Outreach Kim McKay, MDoD Director of Emergency Preparedness Policy Cecilia Warren

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to Kevin Steffy and Travis Dougherty for Their Recent Appointments



Kevin Steffy Elected Vice Chair for TEDPA

Kevin Steffy, MAT manager, was recently elected as the new vice chair of the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA). In this role, Kevin will help lead the association in its mission to exchange information and assist statewide administrators of specialized telecommunications equipment distribution programs.

TEDPA is a national non-profit organization that provides resources and support to its members, which include Relay service providers and manufacturers of telecommunications equipment for people with disabilities.

We congratulate Kevin on his new role with TEDPA, and we look forward to seeing continued innovation from the MAT program, and equipment distribution programs nationwide, under his leadership.



Travis Dougherty Elected Vice Chair of NASRA

Travis Dougherty, Maryland Relay manager, was elected vice chair of the National Association of State Relay Administrators (NASRA) at their annual conference on July 20, 2022.

NASRA is a national non-profit association comprised of individuals who are directly involved in the administration or oversight of Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) for their respective states. Its mission is to promote the availability and use of quality TRS services nationwide.

As vice chair, Travis will help lead the organization in its mission to educate members about regulatory standards and advocate for changes that promote improved quality and efficiency of TRS.

Congratulations to Travis on his election! We look forward to witnessing his contributions to NASRA!



The TAM team gathers for an office-wide farewell party. Top row, from left to right: Leslie Hannibal, Kevin Steffy, Rebecca Miller. Bottom row, from left to right: Donna Broadway-Callaman, Tarita Turner, Jenny Pearson, Jane Hager, Travis Dougherty.

Saying Farewell To Outreach Coordinators Jenny Pearson and Tarita Turner

The TAM team is saying farewell to our Captioned Telephone Outreach Coordinator Jenny Pearson, who is transitioning to become Hamilton Relay’s Regional Outreach Coordinator, and our TRS Outreach Coordinator Tarita Turner.

With a bachelor’s degree in Deaf studies from Towson University, Jenny began her journey with Maryland Relay in 2003 as an intern and later became the outreach coordinator for Captioned Telephone Service in August 2017. Tarita joined the TAM team in 2018 as a recent graduate of Towson University with a bachelor’s degree in Deaf Studies and an associate degree in business from Howard Community College. Her journey with Maryland Relay began as an administrative assistant and she quickly progressed to an outreach coordinator role.

During their time at Maryland Relay, Jenny and Tarita have traveled throughout the state to various residential, commercial, instructional, and public sectors to educate the community about the role of Relay in the lives of those who are Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or who have speaking difficulty, cognitive difficulty, or limited mobility. Jenny’s primary focus was increasing the use of Captioned Telephone for individuals

who have difficulty hearing—including seniors, veterans, people living with tinnitus, and more. Tarita focused on services such as Hearing Carry-Over, Voice Carry-Over, Speech-to-Speech, and Spanish Relay.

Jenny and Tarita have conducted many demonstrations, presentations, and trainings for schools, senior living communities, local businesses, organizations, and associations during their time with Maryland Relay—making a real difference in the lives of each person they’ve connected with through their outreach work.

“Jenny and Tarita have been such an instrumental part of our team,” shares Donna Broadway-Callaman, outreach manager for TAM. “We’re grateful for their years of dedication to the State of Maryland.” Jenny and Tarita will be greatly missed by all members of the TAM team, but we wish them all the best in their future endeavors!

**Need to get in touch with one of our
outreach coordinators about an upcoming
conference or presentation opportunity?
Contact them today at:**

TAM.Outreach@Maryland.gov

Out and About with Maryland Relay's Outreach Coordinators

Fairland Recreational Park Back-to-School Event – August 27

On August 27, the Maryland Relay outreach team attended the Fairland Recreational Park Back-to-School Event. This event was an excellent opportunity to share resources and information about assistive technology available for students who are Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or have some other disability that makes communicating in the classroom difficult. Our team provided information about how Maryland Relay can help these students succeed in school and beyond.

We were excited to see so many families come out for a day of fun. It was great to be able to provide them with the tools they need to ensure that their children have an equal opportunity to succeed in school. We hope to continue participating in events like this in the future so we can reach even more families and help them access the resources they need.



Maryland School for the Deaf Back-to-School Events – September 6

The Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) welcomed back their students for the new school year with Back-to-School events at their Frederick and Columbia campuses. At these events, the MSD staff gave students and their families information about upcoming school year activities and resources available to them, including Maryland Relay.

The Maryland Relay team was available at both campuses to share the programs students can take advantage of to ensure they have a great school year. These programs include Relay service, captioning, audio description, and more. With these services, students can communicate with their families, teachers, and classmates easily and effectively.

Thank you to MSD for having us at their Back-to-School events! We are looking forward to working with your students throughout the school year.



Travis Dougherty and Kevin Steffy participating in MSD's Back-to-School event.

Annual Hispanic Health and Resources Festival

Maryland Relay Outreach Coordinator Tarita Turner attended the Annual Hispanic Health and Resources Festival in Severn, MD on Saturday, September 24. The free event was for Spanish-speaking Maryland residents to learn about the many resources available to them in the state. Attendees were able to receive free COVID-19 vaccines, health screenings, mental health resources, legal services, and more.

Maryland Relay had a table at the event to share information about our programs and services available to Spanish speakers who are Deaf or hard of hearing. We connected with many people who are interested in using our services. Special thanks to the festival organizers for inviting Maryland Relay to participate; we look forward to attending again next year!



Outreach Coordinator Rebecca Miller Interview on DelmarvaLife - October 13

WBOC, an affiliate of CBS, interviewed our very own Maryland RTT Outreach Coordinator Rebecca Miller on its DelmarvaLife program. Rebecca spoke about Maryland's Relay Conference Captioning (RCC) service, explaining how it works and how it can benefit businesses and individuals alike. Conference calls have always been an essential part of the workplace. Still, with so many more people working remotely since the beginning of the pandemic, many of us rely on conference calls more than ever. RCC provides real-time captions of conversations for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, making it easier to follow the discussion.

The free service is offered to Maryland residents, businesses, and organizations, and no special software is required. Participants simply need access to a conference bridge or high-quality audio and an Internet-connected device to read the typed text during the conversation.

Special thanks to DelmarvaLife for inviting Rebecca on air to educate the Eastern Shore community about Maryland Relay and RCC.

Looking to connect with our outreach coordinators? Simply email them at TAM.Outreach@Maryland.gov



Eddie Martinez participating in a Communication Facilitator service call.

Celebrating One Year of the Communication Facilitator Service

On December 17, 2022, the MAT program will acknowledge the one-year anniversary of the first call using the Communication Facilitator (CF) service.

This beneficial service provides Marylanders with combined hearing and vision loss access to video communication platforms such as videophone (VP), Video Relay Services, FaceTime, Zoom, Skype, Google Hangouts, Google Meet, and more. With the assistance of a Communication Facilitator—who uses tactile sign language that is signed into the hands of the person who is DeafBlind, and touch based pro-tactile language that offers more visual details about the environment the other person is calling from—people who are DeafBlind can easily make calls and keep in touch with family, friends, colleagues, and businesses.

“After successfully executing the MAT program’s first CF call last year, we shifted our goal towards training more facilitators and educating the general public about what it means to be DeafBlind,” shares MAT Manager Kevin Steffy. “We’ve been able to work towards our goal with pro-tactile trainings hosted at Gallaudet University this past spring and conducting more calls using the CF service.”



The MAT program is looking forward to hosting more CF trainings in 2023.

If you would like to learn more about becoming a Communication Facilitator, please contact Kevin Steffy at Kevin.Steffy@Maryland.gov or MAT Specialist Jane Hager at Jane.Hager@Maryland.gov.

Equipment Education: Introducing The P300-HCO

Hearing Carry-Over (HCO) users, we have some exciting news for you! Teltex's P300-HCO is now available through the MAT program for qualified applicants who can hear clearly but have difficulty speaking or being understood over the telephone.



Source: <https://teltex.com/p300-hco/>

This telecommunication device does not require a user to connect through HCO Relay services; instead, users can make and receive phone calls with the use of an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) application that is installed directly in the P300-HCO. Using the device's built-in keyboard, the P300-HCO produces spoken responses that derive from the text typed by the user to the other caller. Special features of the P300-HCO include:

- Voice options
- QWERTY keyboard
- Modifiable ring tone
- Bright flasher to indicate ringing
- Android tablet with the AAC app
- Volume control (no AC adapter required)
- And more!

Visit MDMAT.org to apply for a no cost loan of telecommunications equipment to independently make or receive calls.

TAM Fall Word Search

- CRISP
- LEAVES
- NOVEMBER
- APPLE PIE
- SWEATER WEATHER
- HAYRIDES
- GOURD
- SCARECROW
- FOOTBALL
- AUTUMN
- PUMPKIN SPICE
- HARVEST
- OCTOBER
- SEPTEMBER
- CORN MAZE



U W N O V E M B E R E A R I
 A A E C I P S N I K P M U P
 M V N T C P A K S S S P P B
 O H S E I A W E E C R I S P
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The MAT Program Visits DelmarvaLife

In August, MAT Manager Kevin Steffy and MAT Specialist Jane Hager paid a visit to DelmarvaLife, a television program that airs daily on WBOC in Salisbury, to share valuable information about the MAT program with its viewers. Kevin and Jane touched on the importance of the MAT program—detailing the array of assistive equipment available to Marylanders who find it difficult to use a standard telephone, how people can determine if they qualify for State-provided equipment, and how they can apply.

“The feature on DelmarvaLife was a great opportunity for the MAT program,” shares Kevin. “We were able to reach even more people and share the wide range of needs-based equipment that can help so many Marylanders communicate effectively, efficiently, and independently over the phone.”

You can watch the MAT program’s full interview, as well as other Maryland Relay DelmarvaLife interviews, on our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/MDRelay711](https://www.facebook.com/MDRelay711).

Businesses: Keep These Relay Calling Tips In Mind

Every Maryland Relay call is an opportunity to boost sales and gain new customers! When connecting with Relay users, it's important you keep these tips in mind:



1. Don't hang up!

Don't be fooled—Relay calls can sound familiar to telemarketer calls at first, but the Operator will speak on behalf of the caller and inform you that a Relay caller is trying to connect with your business or company.

2. Speak directly to the customer, not the Maryland Relay Operator.

The Operator is there to relay the conversation between you and the Relay caller. Do not speak to the Operator—they will not acknowledge you. Direct all questions or statements directly to the Relay caller.

3. Speak slowly and clearly.

There's no need to shout when you're communicating with a Relay user; however, it helps the Operator tremendously if you speak slowly and clearly. Oftentimes, the Operator has to type out your responses, so speaking slowly and clearly helps them accurately capture what you say.

4. Speak with intention and be aware of your surroundings.

An important thing to note is that the Operator will relay everything they hear to the user—including background noise and voice intonation. Speaking with intention and stepping away from a crowded setting can ensure a smoother Relay calling experience.

5. Use "go ahead" or "GA" to take turns sharing during the conversation.

When you hear "go ahead" or read "GA" it means it's your turn to contribute to the conversation. When you're done speaking, make sure to say "go ahead" or type "GA" so the Operator knows you're finished.

6. Ask your customer if they have a preferred callback method.

Good customer service starts with strengthening your connections. In order to stay in touch with your customers you have to know how to call them back. Make sure to ask all Relay users their preferred calling method before completing the call.

7. Remember to be patient!

You might spend more time on the phone with a Relay caller than you typically would during a standard phone call. Patience will go a long way—and you'll make the Relay user feel appreciated.

To learn more about the different types of Relay calls, visit MDRelay.org!



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 [Facebook.com/MarylandRelay711](https://www.facebook.com/MarylandRelay711)

 [Twitter.com/MDRelay711](https://twitter.com/MDRelay711)

 [Instagram.com/MDRelay711](https://www.instagram.com/MDRelay711)

GABTR is Searching for a DeafBlind Representative



The Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) ensures Maryland Relay users are benefiting from the most up-to-date services and technology while providing TAM with consumer insight and feedback that can help strengthen the agency and its presence in the community.

Currently, GABTR is looking to fill a vacancy on their board with a DeafBlind representative. If you, or someone you know, is interested in serving Relay users throughout the State of Maryland as GABTR's DeafBlind representative, please download, complete, and submit the Board application form.

Ready to apply for the DeafBlind representative position?
The GABTR application can be found online at
DoIT.Maryland.gov/MDRelay/Pages/Advisory-Board.aspx.